



UK–Japan trade deal: overview of animal welfare issues

Ensuring animals have a good life by advocating on their behalf

The UK-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (UK-Japan FTA) is essentially a rollover agreement to the EU-Japan Agreement with additional language in certain areas, though crucially not on animal welfare. The language on animal welfare is weak and the UK-Japan FTA was a missed opportunity to improve on the EU-Japan Agreement.

Other FTAs negotiated by the EU have stronger language on animal welfare and could have been used as a basis to incorporate such language. For instance, there is no language setting out that animals are sentient beings as there is in the EU-Mexico Agreement and in the UK's draft FTA with the EU. There is no mention of the OIE's guidelines and improving cooperation to meet those standards as there is in the EU-Mexico Agreement, or working together in international fora such as the OIE or WTO to improve understanding of animal welfare, also found in the EU-Mexico Agreement¹. Neither is there any language on capacity building or technical assistance to improve animal welfare standards as there is in the EU-Vietnam Agreement², or on regulatory cooperation as there is in the EU-Canada Agreement³. Finally there is no language on encouraging imports of goods produced from equivalent standards through conditional liberalisation, which is precisely what the Secretary of State said to the Trade Committee was the UK's preferred way of dealing with animal welfare⁴. The silence on animal welfare standards is deafening.

Animal welfare standards in Japan are lower than the UK's on farm animals and cosmetics testing so there is potential for goods produced at lower standards to enter the UK. According to World Animal Protection, Japan is rated E for its overall animal welfare standards compared to B for the UK and for farm animal standards G compared to the UK's rating of D⁵.

Although Japan does not use food production techniques banned in the UK such as hormones in beef and dairy cattle farming or washing chickens in chlorine, it does have lower standards in areas that could be sensitive to trade. For instance, Japan is the world's fifth biggest producer of eggs, 90% of which are from caged hens, compared to around 40% in the UK, and the sixth largest producer of poultry meat. While Japan's Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) has published guidelines on animal welfare provision for the major farmed species⁶, they are simply recommendations and are not legally enforceable. In fact it is not clear how many of the World Organisation for Animal Health's (OIE) 14 farm animal welfare Guidelines Japan has put into law. So whilst trade in food products produced to lower standards than the UK is not an immediate concern, it is important to monitor and audit the impact of the reduction in tariffs agreed in the UK-Japan FTA, particularly in areas such as beef, eggs and chicken.

The UK-Japan FTA does not contain explicit wording on whaling, but does call on each party to "effectively implement in its laws, regulations and practices the multilateral environmental agreements to which it is party." Japan should thus be reminded it has to respect the ruling rendered in 2014 by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) condemning the Japanese whaling practices as not being science-driven.

¹ [EU-Mexico trade agreement](#).

² [EU -Vietnam trade agreement](#).

³ CETA. [EU-Canada trade agreement](#).

⁴ Secretary of State [evidence](#) to the International Trade Committee 04.11.20

⁵ WAP. [Animal Protection Index: Japan](#). 2020

⁶ Japan [Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries](#).

For further information or if you have any questions please contact: politicalaffairs@rspca.org.uk

The Impact Assessment compiled by the Department for International Trade (DIT) is poor in its assessment of impacts on animal welfare and has been criticised by the Regulatory Policy Committee report⁷. There needs to be better specialised assessments by the Government in future FTAs on areas such as animal welfare, particularly as the Government has said this is a red line for them.

The Government's agreement for the Trade and Agriculture Commission (TAC) to provide such assessments is a welcome step forward but obviously too late for this FTA. The short time period for the International Trade Committee to assess the FTA and for the House of Commons to assess and approve the FTA highlights the lack of transparency under the Constitutional Reform Affairs and Governance Act (CRaG) process and this needs improvement.

⁷ Page 7, Regulatory Policy Committee, [Opinion: UK-Japan CEPA impact assessment](#), 01.01.21

For further information or if you have any questions please contact: politicalaffairs@rspca.org.uk